9: Stadling--303-305 E-3 (1898) 1901 Yakut-1-3
116, 427, 521

[RCH: This conversation is given in the Yakut language as well as English. Only the English has been included in the Files.]

"The following may be regarded as a typical conversation on the subject of hiring reindeer. The traveller probably begins the bargaining about the reindeer-driving (tabba-aien) thus:—

Have you reindeer?

We have reindeer.

Do you need reindeer?

We do need (reindeer).

How many reindeer do you need?

I need 25 reindeer with sledges and covering (over the luggage) and ropes (6 fathoms to make fast the luggage).

Have you people? [304]

(If) people are to be found or not, I cannot say for certain.

You do not know! who will then know?

So it is. But people will be had.

Where do you want to go?

To Katangskoie I will go.

A long way, friend! In this storm, in this cold a very difficult journey!

A difficult journey no doubt, but I must go.

9: Stadling--303-305 E-3 (1898) 1901 Yakut-2
116, 427, 521

Speak! Will you let me have reindeer or not?

I do not know, if there are any reindeer or not—large reindeer there are probably not many.

How much do you ask for each reindeer to Katangskoie?

Reindeer to one sledge 5 roubles.

Good! Good!

Here you have as earnest money 5 roubles, not more nor less, it is all I possess.

The gentleman (you) is jesting.

Give me the money!

What! do you believe I will cheat you?

No, sir. We Yakuts always ask to get payment beforehand.

Now speak! [305]

How shall we speak (bargain) about the reindeer?

(If) the reindeer dies, on whose neck will that hang?

(If) the reindeer dies from some disease, it hangs on my neck; (if) the reindeer be lost, be killed by wolf, that hangs on your neck.

Will you have it that way?

Good! (But) good reindeer, fat reindeer, please let us have!

Good! good!

Give me (your) hand!

The agreement is made, the people present be witnesses thereof!
Yes, yes! The people present have heard it!
We have heard it! God give them a good journey! "

233 reindeer are missing in their own herds. We tried to find out how
422 this was done, but even the Dolgan themselves could not explain it,
but only said that it was so simple because the eye "gets used to"
233 one's own reindeer. [Fig. 17] If a strange reindeer attaches himself
425 to a herd the owner of the herd passes the word along and supports
the reindeer until its owner is found.

233 It must be concluded that the custom of regarding reindeer as
261 private property did not arise so long ago--perhaps even after the
422 Russians came--which can be seen from the following: 1) in summer
the reindeer owned by a rich man are treated as a food supply for
the whole nomadic group in case of insufficiency of wild animals
and birds; in such cases the reindeer are killed without any com-
pensation for the owner; 2) the fact that it is only within the last
few decades that the reindeer has become an object of merchandise.
These questions are considered in greater detail in our work on the
Dolgan clan, and for this reason we shall not dwell on them here.

233 Up to the present time there has existed the custom of rich men
427 lending reindeer "gratis" to poor men, which cannot help leading
to cases of open or hidden exploitation. Usually in the autumn the
nearby poor men descend on a rich person and take reindeer from
him for their needs for a month, for two months, or until spring,
depending on the understanding; and if the borrowed reindeer is
killed by a wolf or dies of a disease, the poor man does not have
to make good the loss, but merely brings the hide from the rein-
deer's leg to the owner. An especially favorable environment for
exploitation is formed when reindeer are lent to a poor man to im-
port government loads: in this case the rich man gives the poor man
several extra reindeer in order that the poor man may import the
alloted load on them, and for this labor the latter is not repaid in
any way, but the money for transporting the goods goes to the owner
of the reindeer. The advantage of such an arrangement becomes
clear when one realizes that under this system the rich man does
not have to hire draymen at his own expense.

233 Besides the "gratis" dispensation of reindeer, there also exists ex-
432 change of reindeer, and--a later phenomenon--selling of reindeer.

437 In exchanging reindeer, A asks B for one of the latter's fine rein-
deer which A likes, offering in return a reindeer which is not equal
in value to B's reindeer, or even a reindeer which is no good at all;
as he does this, A says that later on B will obtain a good reindeer
from him on the same terms. The selling of reindeer is not a fre-
quent occurrence even nowadays among the Dolgan; they buy (that
is, in 1929-1931) a buck for twenty-five or thirty rubles cash, or for